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Bomb Disposal Teamwork in Kazakhstan

The phone rings in the guard booth and a member of the U.S. Embassy Almaty's local guard force answers it. A man speaking Russian with a Georgian accent shouts:

"Americans and Britain are waging an unjust war in Iraq! Non-believers have paid the price in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Istanbul! Before the sun sets today, the American Embassy in Almaty will burn in a funeral pyre!"

The guard immediately notifies the Marine standing watch at Post One. Embassy Marines assemble and gear up, and the regional security officer is called to the scene. A device is found, the embassy evacuated, and the local authorities are called to deal with a possible improvised explosive device (IED). Under Marine Security Guard and local guard escort, Kazakhstani security forces enter the embassy compound and neutralize the threat.

Sound like a real situation?

On November 22, 2003, the Regional Security Office in U.S. Embassy Almaty, in conjunction with elements from the Government of Kazakhstan's Committee for National Security (KNB) and police officers from the Ministry of Interior (MVD), conducted an in-depth and extremely realistic bomb drill using that exact scenario. Representatives from ATA were also present to observe the KNB and MVD in action.

The Chancery is located on the main thoroughfare in Almaty, and the regional security officer has developed creative

ideas to improve the safety and security of personnel working in the building. Aside from running a number of drills on a regular basis with embassy security staff, the RSO felt it was necessary to conduct a complex bomb drill to test the response of Kazakhstani forces.



Local guard force personnel searched the unclassified areas of the Chancery while MSGs searched classified spaces. Ultimately, a device was discovered in the parking lot on the compound. The area was cordoned off, the building evacuated, and the KNB bomb squad was called to assist.

The bomb squad arrived within minutes with very high-tech equipment, including a radio-controlled, German-designed robot. The TEODOR—or Telerob Explosive Ordinance Disposal Observation Robot—was created to remove, disable, and detonate IEDs within an urban environment. It is equipped with five cameras and a double-shot, disruptor-type Richmond RE70.

Once the ambassador gave his permission for the KNB bomb squad to access the compound parking lot, a bomb disposal technician performed an initial visual survey of the device. Operating from a command post set up on the Chancery perimeter, the KNB bomb disposal unit remotely manipulated the TEODOR into position. The IED was removed from its location under a vehicle and x-rayed. After examining the x-ray, it was decided that the device presented a threat and should be destroyed.

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Behind the Scenes

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The TEODOR has the capability to fire different types of rounds, including a water blast and a slug. In this instance, based on information about the device gathered from the x-ray, the bomb technicians decided that a sand shot would be appropriate.

In addition to providing a change of pace from the standard bomb drill, this event provided an excellent opportunity

to strengthen the relationships between regional security office in Almaty and various Kazakhstani counterterrorism and law enforcement agencies. It also provided a measure of reassurance. Obviously a regional security officer hopes never to need the services of the bomb disposal unit, but it's nice to know that a professional and well-equipped team is available in an emergency. ⚙

